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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study describes the relationships involved in the Partnership for Family Reading, a collaborative project between Montclair State College and a low-income urban school district to promote parent involvement in children's literacy development. Participant observation and other ethnographic research methods were used to produce descriptive data and subject it to critical analysis. The Partnership began in one elementary school in early 1987 and expanded to seven schools. The following summary findings are reported: (1) during the Initiation Phase, 1987/88, a larger structure under which the project was operating helped support the project and initiate it in three schools, but funding was not sufficient to extend the program to all eligible schools; (2) during the Implementation Phase, 1988/89, external funding allowed the program to expand to all seven schools where collegial relationships were developed among participating teachers as well as among teachers and administrators; and (3) during the Continued Implementation Phase, 1989/90, longevity in the program, teacher factors, and school organization helped the three original schools cope best with district-level restrictions and strengthen their programs, while parent factors proved important in expanding the program in one school and maintaining the faltering program in another school. The program's overall ethos of collaboration and the goal of teacher ownership leading to institutionalization in the schools contributed to unexpected results, diversity of program operation in the seven schools, and some differences as well as emerging similarities in goals identified by the college researcher and the school personnel. A list of 19 references and a chart illustrating selected characteristics of participating schools are appended. (FMW)

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Shared Visions, Double Vision, and Changing Perspectives: A College/School Parent Participation Program

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This paper presents an analytic description of a collaborative project between Montclair State College and an urban school district to promote parent involvement in children's literacy development. Called the Partnership for Family Reading, the project provides direct services to parents to enable them to support the literacy development of their young children. It is called a "Partnership" to focus on the need for collaborative efforts of school and home to address the problems of underachievement in this low income, urban district, and to reflect the contribution of the college in working together with both school and home toward that end. The term "Family Reading," reflects the goal of fostering reading activities that involve and benefit all members of the family. The program is essentially preventative.

The purpose of this paper is to explicate the context for collaboration between an institution of higher education and a school district for the purpose of conducting the family participation project. Thus the major focus will be on the relationship between the college and school district in working out the processes and structure of the project. The paper will describe the organizational framework within which the parent project developed, and the school level elements that shaped and continue to shape its particular form. Included are issues of goals, program control, and expected and unexpected outcomes. This report is a preliminary analysis of an ongoing project.

The overall theoretical orientation derives from the extensive literature on the change process and school improvement through staff development (for summaries see Joyce, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1984). The three phases of innovations - initiation of the change, implementation, and institutionalization - will be used as a general framework for the data presented. The study also draws on the body of theory and practice related to collaborations across levels of educational institutions (Gross, 1988; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988).

The theoretical rationale for parent participation includes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological approach in its linkage of home and school settings, the growing body of research that points to the importance of parental involvement for school achievement (Henderson, 1987) and,

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with particular reference to reading, the finding widely endorsed by the research community of the importance of parents reading to children. The design of the programmatic reading activities for parents and children derive from theories that view cognitive development as a social process (Vygotsky, 1978) and view the reader as an active constructor of meaning (see Anderson *et al*, 1985). While programmatic content and outcomes cannot be isolated from a contextual report, they will not be highlighted here, but rather referenced as needed to illuminate the analysis of structure and process.

In view of the growing awareness of the relationship between parent involvement and school achievement, and the emerging thrust for intergenerational efforts in literacy and related areas as in the federal First and Even Start initiatives, it seems likely that collaborative efforts between the academic community and the field will increase. This paper seeks to contribute a critical analysis from the inside of the difficulties and benefits of working across traditional boundaries.

Overview of the Partnership for Family Reading

The Partnership for Family Reading began in one school in early 1987 and is now sited in seven elementary schools in the public school district characterized by a high proportion of low income, minority, and educationally disadvantaged families, as well as the familiar urban ills of unemployment, drugs, teen pregnancies, inadequately funded schools and a dropout rate of 50%. While there is abundant evidence the parents, no less than parents elsewhere, are concerned for the welfare of their children, lack of resources and knowledge limit the ability of many to translate concern into effective action. On a policy level, the school district recognizes the importance of parent participation; home-school collaboration is a district goal. In practice, however, few resources have been allocated . Unsurprisingly, there was no history of staff development in the area of parent participation before the current project.

Responsive to these needs, a family reading effort was initiated by this writer, who serves as its director. Family Reading addresses three constituencies, parents (or other adult relatives),

students, and school personnel. It uses a model of direct services to parents-indirect services to students (Nickse, 1989) in which parents (a) come into the schools to participate in informal sessions dealing with children's literature and ways to foster reading comprehension; (b) go into classrooms to read aloud to their child; and (c) borrow books for home reading. The model incorporates an experiential and interactive view of reading adapted from Handel and Goldsmith (1988a, 1988b, 1989). The parent component was structured, as recommended by Dickinson (1988), yet also flexible in providing for parent input in the realms of book choice, personalized reading relationships, and possible program modifications.

In terms of Epstein's (1987) typology of parent involvement, the program combines aspects of her level 3, parent involvement at school, and level 4, parent involvement in learning activities at home. Not elaborated by Epstein (1987) but an underlying assumption of the program model is the belief that the program must benefit all constituencies and that, apart from benefits to the children, the meaning of the program to teachers and parents should be monitored. Other "theories in use" include the need for urban schools to mount an energetic outreach to parents, to recognize and build on family strengths, and to provide program activities that are enjoyable as well as instructive.

Program components were implemented gradually over the course of the project. Schools aimed to schedule five parent sessions a year. A major event held at the college each spring brings the school community to campus.

On-going staff development to help schools learn ways of communicating and working with families is an integral part of the project. During the first eighteen months (spring semester '87 and AY '87-'88) staff development proceeded on a school-by-school basis and included demonstration parent sessions conducted by the college director. The award of a grant by the Metropolitan Life Foundation enabled centralized staff development workshops to be held on a twice-monthly (AY '88-'89) or monthly basis (AY '89-'90). The workshops foster collaborative work on program development and implementation issues and provide up-dates on children's books and pedagogy, conceptual information and research findings, and orientation to parent

involvement activities beyond the local level. They are attended by fourteen key teachers from the participating schools. Twice-yearly informational meetings and numerous informal contacts are held with building administrators, also

The Partnership was designed as a school-based program; as might be expected , program activities vary somewhat across sites. The seven schools differ in facilities, climate, administrative practices and staff; also, three schools joined the program earlier than the others. Currently, the program extends to twenty-six kindergarten and first grade classrooms in six participating schools, and to grades one through three in the seventh school. A total fifty-five parent sessions have been held thus far. On average, about one-third of the parents attend the sessions. All parent sessions and preparatory activities take place during the school day under the leadership of school personnel. The college director devotes an average one day per week to the Partnership.

The Partnership has created new roles for both teachers and parents in the seven schools, implying changes in self-concept and interpersonal relationships as well as structural modifications in both school and home settings. The role of the college director as conceptualized at the outset was to mediate those changes by providing additional resources of knowledge, time and authority, to conduct staff development workshops, to conduct demonstration parent workshops, plan with building level administrators and provide overall project coordination. As the most potentially productive (and personally congenial) way of working, a collaborative and experiential ethos guided the project. In staff development work with teachers, an interactive research and development model (Griffin, Lieberman & Noto, 1982; Tikunoff, Ward & Griffin, 1975) encouraged teachers to take leadership in designing and implementing programs for their school, to collaborate with other teachers, and to reflect on and evaluate their efforts.

The research to be reported here deals with the context for these collaborative efforts and consequent issues of goals, program, and outcomes.

Methodology and Data Source

The school-based nature of the project and, particularly, the focus on collaboration and teacher ownership meant that goals and practices would continue to emerge over the course of the project and differ by school. Therefore, the a naturalistic methodology was adopted as most appropriate. Participant observation and other ethnographic research methods were used to produce descriptive data and subject it to critical analysis; a phenomenological approach was used to understand human behavior from the participants' own frame of reference including that of this researcher (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Erickson,1986).

The writer functioned as participant observer for all staff development workshops and for 25 parent sessions. Teachers submitted oral or written reports for all other parent sessions. Observations were cross-checked whenever possible. All project activities were documented from the inception. (See Sirotnik and Goodlad,1988, for methods appropriate to school-higher education collaborative efforts.). The data base, not all of which will be reported here, includes field observations and/or teacher reports of 55 parent sessions in the schools; observations at the college site; notes of informal contacts with participants; minutes of19 in-service workshops, 9 principals meetings, and 4 central office meetings; two sets of teacher evaluations; interviews with 12 parents; and records of parent participation and teacher-generated documents.

Selected characteristics of the seven participating schools are set forth in figure 1.

Contexts for Collaboration: The Initiation Phase

Spring 1987 & AY '87-'88

The Family Reading effort originated within the structure of a larger collaborative project which provided a significant context for its operations. Briefly, the public school district, under mandate to improve, had solicited the help of area colleges and assigned to each college a high school and its "cluster" of feeder elementary schools. A central office administrator and staff were appointed to facilitate the college collaboration. In spring 1987, Montclair State College with

funding from the New Jersey Department of Higher Education began working with a "cluster" of 19 schools. At the writer's initiative, approval was obtained for a pilot family project in one school as consonant with district goals for parent participation. Eighteen months later, the district asked the writer to respond to a request for proposals and the Partnership grant was written with some input from the central office administrator. Now funded by the external grant, the Partnership functions as an autonomous unit within the cluster structure. That structure and the fact that the writer, director of the Family Reading Partnership, served the larger project as assistant coordinator (and later as coordinator) was particularly important during the initiation phase of the family reading effort.

Access was easy. A target School A was selected and in February 1987, the writer addressed the staff on the general subject of parent participation in reading. Six teachers volunteered to meet for a series of exploratory workshops; they would be paid for their time. After several weeks it became clear that only one teacher was willing and able to put in a sustained effort; indeed, she alone had not used the sessions to vent complaints about parents but had confided in confidence that unlike the others she "did not dislike" her students' parents. Ms. F., a kindergarten teacher, seemed bright and energetic. While the value of continuing to work in School A with only one teacher might be questioned, her eagerness and the writer's commitment to parent participation overrode any hesitation. Together we adapted the model and instituted two well-received sessions for kindergarten parents.

Dissemination of this modest beginning occurred through the cluster structure, also. The following summer the college organized an institute on cooperative learning for district teachers. The writer helped lead the institute. Ms. F. attended. She chatted about the parent sessions with other teachers. The program was briefly presented. Although no explicit invitation was intended, teachers from two schools asked if they could participate. They saw benefits for the children, but the specific reasons for their enthusiasm varied.

The staff member from School B, a guidance counselor, spoke of the difficulties and importance of parenting in her school community; she saw family reading as a way to reach those

parents and as part of her guidance function in the school. She said she worked closely with the principal and was sure of his approval, which was in fact readily obtained. The two teachers from School C had worked together as a team for several years. They saw the program as a chance to validate their preferred instructional practices. They objected to the district's focus on skill practice and workbook and liked the idea of more story-reading in the classroom. They said they had to "sneak" story reading in whenever possible now. Family reading was an opportunity to bring it out from under cover and "anyway," they said, "the reading strategies involved are familiar to us." Thus they felt ready to start the program. As for their principal, they said they would merely inform him of their plans; he was a "hands-off" administrator who would neither help nor hinder, an assessment that was to prove correct.

In Fall '87, the program began operating in all three schools with the writer providing on-site consultations with staff and participating in the parent sessions. As anticipated, the diversity and constraints of the sites with respect to physical facilities and personnel resources helped shape implementation of the program. For example, in School A with only one teacher participating and no provision for class coverage, and in School C with no meeting room or library, parent workshops were held in the classroom with the teacher demonstrating books and strategies for parents and children together. School B, however, had a library across the hall from the kindergarten rooms and the participation of a guidance counselor as well as classroom teachers. Separate parent workshops were held and then the parents dispersed to read in classrooms. The arrangement required more input from the college director in planning and conducting the new parent workshops which served as demonstrations to the school personnel. In Schools A and C, she occasionally demonstrated, but more often observed and offered commentary.

Access to books was another resource issue. Surveys showed few books in the home and infrequent use of public libraries. None of the schools had books available for parents to borrow for home reading to children. However, facilitating home reading was a more salient issue to the writer than to school personnel whose concerns were focused on in-school rather than home activities. The writer began to pressure the principal of School B to open the school library for borrowing by parents, and to ask the central office administrator to fund books, a request granted when a surprise ($1000) surplus appeared toward the end of the fiscal year. Until this point, the project had been supported solely by released time awarded to the writer and funding for two after-school teacher workshops.

The larger "cluster" structure continued to function to validate and disseminate the project. Follow-ups of the summer institute and some forty other in-service workshops throughout the year meant increased visibility of college faculty in the schools and chances to establish bona fides and personal relationships. Illustrative is the case of Ms. G, a Family Reading teacher who had attended the summer institute. Despite discouraging experiences in her school including administrators who prevent her from taking needed leadership in Family Reading, she has attended all staff development sessions. Two years after the fact she cites the summer institute and a wish to work with Montclair faculty as the reason for her continued involvement.

A series of three cluster meetings provided a more formal forum for communication with principals. Oral reports at meetings met with polite attention and possibly some skepticism, but after slides of family reading in operation were shown principals of four additional schools expressed interest in participating. Apparently, seeing was believing.

The writer held brief meetings with teachers in the four schools to provide orientation. Principals of Schools D and G also sent teachers to observe the program. Schools D and E started sessions; school F, just setting up its library, would wait until the following year. With the exception of School G all schools were represented at a subsequent staff development workshop.

Also under the aegis of the cluster, later that spring a conference on families and school achievement was convened at Montclair State College. District teachers, administrators and

parents attended sessions on research and practice. Included was a highly rated session conducted by the Family Reading teachers of Schools A and B together with a participating parent. Several parents commented with interest on seeing their children's teachers in this new role outside the school.

In sum, during the initiation phase , the larger structure under which it was operating helped validate the family reading effort, provided additional opportunities for involvement with the schools, and offered ready access to schools and communication channels. An unanticipated drawback, however, was the inability to limit participation under a structure that sought to serve all schools. By the end of the year it was clear that both the district and the college had outrun their resources for the Family Reading program and that a more centralized operation was needed if the participation of seven schools was to be maintained.

The Implementation Phase: AY '88-'89

Contexts for Collaboration

August 1988 brought hoped-for good news and unexpected bad news. The award of a two-year grant from the Metropolitan Life Foundation meant support for staff development, more equitable compensation for the college director, and funding for children's books and the home reading component of the program. The bad news was the dissolution of the special central office unit that had facilitated the college collaboration. For budgetary reasons and without consultation with the colleges, the district reformulated its goals for the collaboration, folded the unit's duties into those of another department and transferred the administrator out. This development deprived both the cluster project and the Partnership for Family Reading of resources of expertise and time expected from the district. Indeed, although the former administrator had been written into the grant as co-director, there was not to be any replacement.

The existence of external funding permitted the Partnership to proceed despite this setback. Two "key teachers" were identified from each school and invited to participate in staff development workshops. They were to lead implementation efforts and disseminiate information

in their schools to the other teachers involved. Eleven staff development workshops and 35 parent sessions representing 623 individual contacts by family members were held during the year. Also, when a family reading festival brought some 300 parents, children and teachers to Montclair, the college functioned as an additional setting in which parents learned about their role in the euducative process and shared reading activities with their child. Two teachers and a parent joined the writer in a presentation at a professional conference. With this level of implementation and possibly also because of uncertainty about other activities of the cluster, in their reports to the superintendent principals cited Family Reading as the major way their schools participated in the larger college. One principal reported plans to submit a grant proposal that included parent participation. Thus, at the end of AY '88-'89 Family Reading was viewed as a major contribution to the overall cluster program.

The Schools

Historically, the schools had a poor record of parent involvement and little attendance at open house or PTA meetings. Safety considerations were a complicating factor. Five schools were not available for evening meetings due to safety factors; in two cases parents and staff avoided the area after school dismissal even in daylight hours. With few existing structures in the schools on which to build, as the most successful parent involvement effort Family Reading itself became the building block. In School E it was the only parent effort. In Schools A and B, the program became a way to bolster other school functions; with a large number of parents already in the school, Chapter I staff scheduled their meetings immediately following the reading sessions.in order to attract participation.

It is important to note that on the school level teachers were faced with two new tasks: negotiating new roles with parents and negotiating the logistics of organizing the parent sessions and recruiting attendance. While staff development supported both, the exigiencies of life in the schools and communities precluded easy implementation of the program. For example, despite the college director's requests, no additional time was made available to key teachers for phone calls,

purchasing refreshments, xeroxing invitations or sharing information with other teachers; they did those tasks on their own time with the occasional help of an aide. Teachers reported strategies for getting what they needed. Two routinely cloaked themselves in the college director's authority ("Dr. Handel says...") if building administrators protested their use of the office xerox or phone. Others learned to monitor office staff to make sure that materials were processed on time. Parent sessions took place during the school day, and teachers learned to negotiate their needs for class coverage with their administrators.

While all administrators strongly endorsed the program , their involvement varied from the "hands-off" principal of School C to "take charge" administrators of Schools D and G who ran the parent sessions and in the case of the latter pre-empted teacher participation. At Schools B, E and F, administrators read to parents and children or made special presentations at the sessions initially upon encouragement from me or a dose of "Dr. Handel says." from the teacher, but on a more routine basis thereafter. Administrators of Schools A and C looked in at the parent sessions only briefly and occasionally. In the case of School A , however, administrative facilitation was extensive with much joint planning by the key teacher and administrator.

Collegiality and Teacher Leadership:

With several teachers participating in the program in each school, communication and collegiality among teachers as well as between teachers and administrators was necessary. The key teachers were to organize the program, conduct or help conduct parent sessions and enlist the assistance of others; additional participating teachers saw parents only in the classroom reading component of the program and did not participate in centralized parent sessions (Schools B,D.and G). Twice-monthly staff development workshops for key teachers provided a forum for sharing experiences and suggestions, and offering special expertise as when the librarian members assisted with book orders or teachers described a particularly successful technique. The description that follows summarizes collegial and leadership experiences in the schools.

School A: Although both Ms. F, the kindergarten teacher, and Ms. C, grade 1, attended all staff development workshops, only the former held sessions for parents. Ms. C said she was not "ready." She observed the kindergarten sessions, and also collaborated with Ms. F in conducting a special parent session on puppet-making, an idea suggested at a previous staff workshop. Ms. F had presented her plans to me, but had taken leadership as usual in developing a new initiative.

School B: Ms. T, the guidance counselor, and Ms. S, a kindergarten teacher, served as key staff disseminating the program to four other teachers in their school.and working closely with the principal. Each, however, complained about the other to me. Ms. S felt she, not Ms. T, should have been included in a conference proposal; Ms. T criticized Ms. S. for claiming exclusive ownership of a certain home reading activity and presenting it to parents as separate from Family Reading. The college director mediated as best she could, expressing pleasure that Ms. S. had contributed a new feature to the program. Ms. S maintained, however, that it was not part of the program at all, but something distinctly her own. Faced with what appeared to be a strong need for ownership, the college director backed off; the program was going well in School B despite the friction and parents were reporting special pleasure in their contact with Ms. S. (In point of fact, the new activity, in which parents kept records of books read with a prize for those who read the most, resembled activities elsewhere in use and in any case the books read were borrowed from the program.) The dispute subsided as the year progressed; the following year, when Ms. T's involvement decreased, Ms. S became more visible at the parent sessions and provided especially effective leadership. As has been noted, it was Ms. T who originated the program after learning of it at the summer institute; it appears likely that Ms. S reacted to what seemed like her secondary status.

School C. Teamwork was the hallmark here. Two key teachers and a third shared the work of implementing the program in their combined teaching unit serving grades one through three.

School D. As key teachers, the librarian and a first grade teacher networked with kindergarten and other first grade teachers. Parent sessions were scheduled by the principal and conducted by him and the librarian. Because of the number of classrooms involved, parent

attendance ranged from 30-50 at the large group session. The librarian also brought parents to the school library and recommended books, an activity she regretfully abandoned when spring rains flooded the library through an unrepaired roof.

School E. The three kindergarten teachers alternated conducting the parent sessions. Two attended staff development workshops as key teachers, with one, Ms. R , being more proactive in working with school administrators. Several years earlier, she had drafted an unsuccessful proposal for a parent center in the school.

School F. The principal participated in all parent sessions and frequently assembled other administrators and special staff to do so as well. Key teachers were the librarian and a first grade teacher, Ms.M, who said she attended staff development workshops only because the friend with whom she drove home stayed late those days also. Ms. M. seemed committed to the program, however, and worked hard and effectively to recruit parent attendance. Nonetheless,when her friend's schedule changed the following year, she dropped out of the program completely!

School G. The vice-principal conducted the parent sessions and ran the program in ways to preclude teacher participation. Ms G, the key teacher, was not given time to attend the parent sessions or to meet with the other teachers who were not oriented to parents reading in classrooms or to the program in general. It was Ms. G's contention that the administrator did not want parents in the school "hanging around." The college director's requests to meet with teachers as a group were not filled although when her invitation to lead several parent session was accepted, she was able to see them for hurried individual meetings. Collegiality in this school depended on administrator facilitation which was not forthcoming.

Implementation Continued: AY '89-'90

Contexts for Collaboration

Events on the district level again impacted on the Partnership, this time affecting school operations directly. To help finance the new teachers' contract, teacher aide time was curtailed

and librarians were used to cover teacher preparation periods. This meant more pressure for the classroom teachers and the loss of flexibility and services from staff who not been bound to a teaching schedule. In addition, classroom teachers felt they were being held accountable for the use of a basal reading program newly introduced by the district.

Three key teachers withdrew from the program or curtailed their involvement. On a personal level, another complicating factor was the illness and disability of the two administrators in Schools D and G who had held the program so close to their chests. Concurrently, there were expectations from the parents that the program would expand; parents who had participated the previous year had requested that the program continue to include them when their children were in a higher grade. Unsurprisingly, as the year began logistics reappeared as a central concern at the staff development workshops.

The Partnership grant included some funding for substitute teachers which might have alleviated some of the pressure. However, neither the teachers, school administrators, central office staff or the college director could work out the logistics of scheduling in the seven schools (schools would have had to share half-day subs) or negotiate permission for the unusual arrangement. Here, the absence of a district co-director with expertise in negotiating the bureacracy was keenly felt. Also lacking was assistance in monitoring the seven program sites.

Ten staff development workshops were scheduled for AY '89-'90. Another Family Reading Festival at the college is forthcoming. Approximately 25 parent sessions will have been held by the end of the year, about 10 fewer than before.

The narrative that follows describes school-level events including formal structures and collegial relationships. As will be noted, the three original schools, A, B, and C, coped best with district-level vicissitudes and indeed strengthened their program in several ways. Possible factors to account for their relative success include longevity in Family Reading; teacher factors of motivation, skills and program ownership (only in schools A,B, and C were teachers, rather than administrators, the initiators of a school's participation); school organization; or a

combination of these. Parent factors proved particularly important in expansion of the program in School B, and in maintenance of a faltering program in School E.

Contexts for Collaboration: The Schools

School A. The program was expanded, restructured and consolidated in this school largely due to the initiative of Ms. F, the key kindergarten teacher, and facilitation by her administrator. Ms. F saw an opportunity to schedule separate parent sessions during times when most of her students were out of the room for special instruction, thereby allowing program extension to first grade as well as kindergarten parents Her administrator made arrangements for the remaining children and also sent bi-lingual staff to assist with translation. After two such meetings, however, Ms. F reported a decline in attendance and felt that gearing up each month for a new recruitment effort was burdensome. At the college director's suggestion, she adopted a different timetable - the same number of meetings but at weekly intervals - and a different type of parent workshop with more continuity built in. We conducted the parent sessions together, the college director's participation serving to demonstrate the new workshop techniques. At Ms. F's suggestion, the administrator also arranged for all first grade teachers to attend so that they too could learn and have the additional contact with parents. Ms. F reported an increase in book borrowing for home reading following the new workshops.

School B. In response to parent requests, the program was expanded to second grade. With a core of interested parents recruitment was less of an issue. Written invitations were no longer elaborately decorated; a brief announcement seemed to suffice. Also, the key teachers were very visible in the school and maintained personal contact with parents. A librarian now participated in the program, offerring lively presentations and welcoming parent use of the library. In the fall, the college director had asked this new staff member to participate; the principal agreed to give her time and also made special arrangements with Ms. S so that she could manage an expanded program. Parents also played a role in maintaining the program in this school. Experienced participants oriented newcomers and spoke of the program's value at meetings; the

school clerk recounted how she "grabbed a book" whenever she had a free moment and read to her child's class.

Under the auspices of Chapter I,parenting sessions on human relations topics.were scheduled after Family Reading. Many parents remained in school to attend. Thus, in School B, a multi-faceted parent program was developed.

School C. School C was least touched by district level developments. The three teachers had long taught together as a team, sharing work and drawing on one another's special abilities. Their issues were coping with an influx of new students and a change to less suitable classroom facilities, as well as poor parent attendance. They reported plans to address the latter by making home visits to a neighboring low-rise housing college. They are the only teachers to consider going out into the community.

School D. With the principal incapacitated and the time of the librarian constrained, fewer parent sessions were held and attendance declined. The vice-principal, doing double duty in the principal's absence, had never been involved in the program. The key teachers expressed uncertainty and discouragement; they reported other teachers complained that the program was disruptive with so few parents coming into the classrooms to read.

School E. Intervention with the administrator was needed to restore collegiality among the teachers. Ms. R, who had emerged as the key teacher after her colleague withdrew, reported herself "overworked" and the other two teachers uncooperative. At the college director's request, the administrator met with the teachers who then resumed the practice of alternating the responsibility for parent sessions.

Parent recruitment remained an unresolved issue in school E; the neighborhood was the most crime-ridden and disorganized of all the schools. At the college director's suggestion, three parents who were vocal advocates of Family Reading were enlisted to help. Those women had participated in the program from the outset and had enjoyed special, personalized training in a previous session when they were the only parents to attend. They publicized the program to parents dropping their children off at school and also did reading demonstrations at a workshop. Since the

women reported personal benefits from the experience, a new direction for parent involvement may be possible. Attendance at the meetings, however, did not increase.

School F. An overburdened principal and the withdrawal of a key teacher brought the program to a temporary standstill. They had been the sparkplugs the previous year. The third key staff person, a librarian, did not have strong contacts with parents or time to develop them. Despite the college director's advice to build on established interest by targeting parents who had attended last year, the librarian followed previous practice and contacted only new kindergarten parents with resulting poor attendance. The college director attempted to support the principal's continuing involvement, but despite three extended consultations she appeared unable to act in the situation. Ironically, a great deal of the principal's energy was spent developing a successful grant proposal that included an expanded parent program and a school parent coordinator. Thus, it seems likely that Family Reading will resume in School F next fall.

School G: The illness of the school administrator and the exclusion of meaningful participation by teachers resulted in a late start for the program and poor attendance. The college director's visits to the school were discouraged. To build a base of participation, the college director advised limiting the program to the key teacher's classroom, but the principal rejected the suggestion. The unsatisfactory situation continues.

The Implementation Years:
Issues of Goals, Program Control, Expected and Unexpected Outcomes

The project's overall ethos of collaboration and the goal of teacher ownership leading to institutionalization in the schools contributed to unexpected results, diversity of program operation in the seven schools, and some differences as well as emerging similarities in goals identified by the college researcher and school personnel.

Issues of Goals

Shared visions as to goals include the importance of parent participation, the creation of a welcoming setting for parents in the school, and endorsement of enjoyment as a vital component of the learning process. The program provides happy learning occasions for parents and children. Teachers attributed their own continuing involvement to the enjoyment they see parents and students getting from the program. As observation and parent interviews indicate, parents and children find the books interesting, enjoy reading together and "don't hear anything negative" about their kids. In addition to the enjoyment of a reading relationship with their child, for some parents an emerging goal is the improvement of their own reading competencies.

Parent education is a stronger focus for the researcher than for school personnel, however. Parent education, as distinct from parent participation, is not articulated as a constitutent part of the program by teachers or administrators. While they want parents to be involved, teachers are oriented to students. They believe parents are learning how to read to their children; they report that parents seem more "confident" about working with their child; and they note with satisfaction that parents are borrowing more books for home reading from school and public libraries. However, benefits to parents in the area of their own adult literacy development or parenting is not a firm goal.

Another goal difference is the gradualist orientation of the college director in fostering change (Etzioni, 1966) vs. the it-isn't-a-success-unless-all-parents-participate orientation of the school. In adopting a gradualist approach, the college director has emphasized building up a stable program with a core of involved parents, but particularly for administrators the thrust is quantity, rather than quality of program. This has been most pronounced at School D where the principal spread discouragement among his staff when attendance fell, and at Schools A and G where administrators attempted to expand the program prematurely.

Teachers, also, needed to develop realistic expectations about attendance, the need for energetic recruitment, and flexibility in providing for participation. Markers of progress in this regard are teacher awareness of the history of other parent programs, participation criteria that

include book borrowing for home reading and not just attendance at parent sessions, and a willingness to work with whatever number of parents do actually attend. In a particularly productive development last year, when only three parents showed up for a session in School E , the teacher overcame her disappointment and worked with them intensively; the three parents are now proactive in Family Reading in the school.

Until this year, discrepancies between Family Reading's literature and discussion based activities and the skills-based reading curriculum of the schools presaged conflict between district and program goals in the area of instruction. In '89-'90, the district adopted a more compatible approach. Now, plans are being made to build on the common focus.

Issues of Control and Collegiality

Staff development in the Partnership attempts to foster teacher ownership of the program and institutionalization in the schools. While each site follow the general program outline of informative parent sessions, parent-child reading in classrooms, and home reading, many details of the program rest with the schools. Within this collegial context, the college director's role has been to (a) facilitate program operations and be an idea champion in the district (b) supply informational resources and orientation about the field of parent participation, ways to operate programs, parent perspectives, books for children, and reading strategies and (c) provide instruction in areas of special expertise. Unsurprisingly, issues of program control center on the director's role as program initiator and reading expert.

As program initiator, the college director expected to be involved in the early stages of implementation in each school. School G, however, began the program without notifying the director, and it was only at a chance meeting that she learned that the school had held a parent session. The lack of communication, perhaps due to an eager initiative on the part of the school, also proved to be the norm of operations for a school which subsequently resisted contact with the college director. The teacher team of School C provides another more successful example of self-

sufficiency in running their program; those teachers, however, maintained contact via the staff development workshops.

Role ambiguity between college director and teachers was most apparent with regard to pedagogy, with some teachers resistant to instruction in program-appropriate reading strategies during the staff development workshops. A major area of divergence is the tendency for teachers to focus on the presentation of material or instructions to parents, rather than actively involve them in an learning activity. Experience in the program shows that while parents do not protest a role as audience, they welcome more active participation and the social contact that it entails. Generally, teachers are more receptive to instruction given in response to a specific request, or to a demonstration at one of the parent sessions. Similarly, suggestions for program design meet more success when the recommendation solves a pragmatic problem perceived by teachers, rather than a more theoretical one. For example, a complete redesign of parent sessions was implemented by school A when it was offered as a solution to a recruitment problem. Other benefits were recognized later.

In other cases, the solution is less simple. Observation showed that several teachers tended to prolong their demonstration reading in the classroom; some parents had to leave; others seemed inattentive. In the case of one "take-charge" teacher, it was not possible to modify this behavior. She simply went on reading aloud to children and participating parents. What got lost was the opportunity for parents to practice what they saw. It should be said, not so parenthetically, that the parents like this teacher and find her very welcoming. She sends books home and the parents read them. Does it matter that parent-child reading does not happen in her classroom? Probably not.

Many instances of shared visions and reciprocal influence occurred during the staff development workshops with respect to program design. Suggestions offered by the college director and elaborated upon or implemented by teachers related to administrator involvement, personal contact with parents, use of school resources, and special presentations. For example, when the college director suggested that parents be awarded certificates for participation, several teachers

said they were thinking of that too. One mentioned a source of certificates. Teachers reviewed the idea at a subsequent workshop. All awarded certificates at an end of the year ceremony.

Suggestions were offered by the teachers as well. At the end of '88-'89, teachers reported that they were ready to learn more. Topics were suggested and guest speakers arranged for the staff development workshops. In '89-'90, outreach to community organizations began. Also, teachers contributed their special expertise in planning the college's Family Reading Festival. They offered suggestions to make it more appealing to children, responded enthusiastically to a request to demonstrate reading activities, and added that they would plan presentations for parents as well as children at the Festival. While teachers spent more time discussing appealing activities for the children, their suggestion to include activities for parents indicated growing cognizance of their parent education role.

Outcomes - Expected and Unexpected

Expected events include: (a) site diversity in facilities, program elements, staff, and proactiveness of administrators; (b) difficulties with early implementation efforts; (c) on-going difficulty of parent recruitment; (d) success of book borrowing component of the program (e) enjoyable parent-child reading relationships; and (f) changes in adult reading behaviors and attitudes.

While parents regard the parent-child reading experience as the highlight of the program, anecdotal information indicates other benefits for adults as well. Several indicate that they have learned something about the nature of the reading process itself, saying that "reading is more than reading," that it involves oral expressivenes, discussion, questioning and thinking. Many report that Family Reading has caused them to "became interested in reading again" or to "pick up a book which I haven't done since high school." Others have begun asking the school librarian to recommend books for their personal reading. Three parents went on to become teacher's aides and apply in the classroom what they learned in Family Reading. In eight instances, parents

have become directly involved in the school as teacher aides or volunteers, thus contributing to school functioning.

While school differences were expected to make a difference in operations and outcomes of the program, the precise nature and the consequences of the differences were unknown at the outset. Much of this report has explicated those school level differences. In particular, the effort to develop school-level leadership and the varied relationships between teachers and administrators in assuming leadership in the program were major findings.

Also unexpected were (a) three district level actions (reduction of central office support for the Partnership and changes in the reading curriculum as has been noted, and initiation of a district-wide reading incentive program); (b)rapid expansion of the program to four additional schools; and (c) the development of special competencies on the part of the parents due to factors of program organization.

The special comptency arose from a need to provide for children whose parents did not attend the classroom reading sessions. In six of the schools parents read to small groups of children, not just their individual child. They developed teacher-like competencies in their book handling and questioning behavior, modeling themselves on what they had seen the teacher demonstrate. The parents reported pride in their accomplishment, particularly their skill in holding the attention of a group of youngsters.

On the district level, a district-wide reading incentive contest was held in '88-'89 with classes competing in number of books read. Although there was no focus on parent involvement, for kindergarten students, books read by parents counted. Teachers felt that the contest fostered awareness of the importance of reading, increased the amount of reading in all schools, and supported Family Reading. One less desirable outcome was to confound any attempt to measure Family Reading's effect in increasing awareness and amount of reading on the part of teachers and students, and to cast doubt on efforts to tease out effects of the parent involvement program.

A pleasant surprise was the relative continuity of principals and teachers in a district with high staff turnover. Most gratifying and only minimally surprising was the hard work of the key teachers and their commitment despite difficulties in a pioneering enterprise.

Prospects for Institutionalization and Discussion

The Partnership began with the goals of introducing parent participation into a district with little recent history of same and of conducting staff development to support the project and its institutionalization in the schools. Since the project is continuing, conclusions would be premature. However, from the data gathered thus far it seems clear that parent, student and staff response to the Partnership program has been enthusiastic. Teachers report increased student interest in reading. The teachers themselves are enjoying their interaction with parents and becoming skilled in planning the family activities. Observation, interviews and anecdotal reports show that the children are delighted with their parents' participation and that the parents are enjoying the read-aloud sessions in the classroom and at home. Parents have commented on how much they are learning about the reading process and the importance of engaging children in questioning and discussion skills. They appreciate the availability of interesting books and are eager to borrow them for home reading. These tentative results accord with those reported by Handel and Goldsmith (1989) describing a similar program in a different setting; the implication is that the literature-based program model has generalizability across settings.

Prospects for continuance with or without the participation of the college director appear good in three of the seven schools (A, B and C) with a fourth (F) scheduled to embark on a more broadly-based parent project next year. For institutionalization to occur, however, it is likely that new organizational structures are needed in the schools to provide in a systematic, rather than ad hoc way, for flexibility of teachers' schedules and provision of time for them to confer disseminate information, plan and conduct the parent sessions. A new position of parent coordinator needs to be established in the schools as well.

The Partnership for Family Reading shows what can be accomplished through the efforts of a handful of energetic people working in an area of great need. While hardly an ideal project, it is illustrative of certain variables that may be present in other college-school collaborations for the purpose of fostering innovation. The following discussion considers organizational factors that may be common to a range of projects and factors that relate more specifically to parent participation.

Organizational Factors

Failure to account for diversity of sites is reported in many innovation efforts (Bruce, 1990, p.7). The Partnership for Family Reading took site diversity into account from the beginning and let certain aspects of the program be shaped by it. Thus to the greatest extent possible conflict with established school routines and unrealistic demands upon resources and personnel was avoided. A negative aspect is lack of uniformity in the overall program which makes program management and evaluation more difficult.

It is worth noting that programs in schools which joined the Partnership at the initiative of principals were less successful than those whose motivational impetus came from teachers. That makes intuitive sense in school-based, teacher-lead programs.

Higher level structures affected the school-based programs. As this report demonstrates, no system operates in isolation. It was important to monitor higher level systems and also to monitor their relationships to one another. For example a new reading program that had implications for Family Reading was introduced by the district without prior communication with the college despite the fact that faculty had been heavily involved in reading improvement work with the schools both in Family Reading and in the larger "cluster" project. In part, the lack of communication with the college reflected fragmentation of authority within the central office.

It was also important to monitor changes in the higher level systems. The change in central office organization , disbanding a separate college-school collaborative division, placing the "cluster" and allied activities under an existing administrative structure whose personnel were expected to assume these additional duties and not replacing the project co-director with an

individual at a comparable administrative level meant increased responsibility for the college director. In retrospect, more energetic measures should have been taken to compensate for the diminished level of support from the district's central office .

Changes in the influence of higher level systems also occurred. For example, the "cluster" project was more important in the initiation phase and first year of implementation of Family Reading than in the second year. It may assume greater importance again in the future when the external grant funding the Partnership comes to an end.

Urban schools with scant resources such as those in the Partnership have little tolerance built in with respect to personnel, time or facilities and may be especially vulnerable to pressure from the higher level systems . Schools with strong leadership, whether from administrators, teachers or both, may be able to cope assisted by minimal intervention from an external project director, as was the case with Schools A, B and C. Less well orgnized schools could not despite strenuous intervention.

School level events such as other parent meetings or the unexpected decision of one principal to become involved in a time-consuming grant proposal impacted on the program and also helped define its relative importance in the school. Personal vicissitudes such as illness had a particularly negative impact in schools where control of the program was vested in individuals.

In a program with so many stakeholders, it was important to recognize the diversity of concerns and the evolution of relationships.. For example, the external director's role was more salient in the initiation phase, less so as teachers learned to assume leadership. The project director's role then became one of maintenance and pushing the program ahead. Differences in goals and perspectives had to be negotiated; for example, the project director's gradualist orientation was never fully adopted by school staff who looked for quick results. Similarly, her concern with home as well as school reading activities or with adult learning was not fully shared by school staff.

Ideally, all stakeholders should benefit from the program. On the district level, the program furthered district goals and brought welcome publicity; the central office praised the

program, but supplied few resources. In the case of building administrators, the program was a way to show they were doing their job. They featured Family Reading in their official reports and were pleased to have their schools showcased at "cluster" meetings or mentioned by the superintendent. Teachers reported rewards from the source traditionally available to them in the social system of the school- contact with students and a sense of their own professional purpose - and increasingly from contact with parents as well. Opportunities for them to participate in professional meetings provided some external rewards. Parents and students enjoyed their reading relationship, learned to use reading comprehension strategies and read more. Improvements also appeared in parents' literacy behavior and sense of personal efficacy

Finally, it seems clear that, given the resources, a smaller and more concentrated effort was in order. That the Partnership for Family Reading took the form it did was due to organizational factors and also the perceived desirability of responding to the growing interest in the program in a district where few opportunities existed for effective parent involvement.

Parent Participation Projects

Personal outreach to parents and the establishment of a personalized relationship with parents proved vital to the maintenance of the program in the Partnership schools. Where such a relationship developed, the program was likely to continue. Where it did not occur, the program withered. From the parents' perspective, their most important contact was with the person closest to their child, namely the classroom teacher. Thus, schools in which classroom teachers played an important role could mount more effective programs than schools in which administrators limited teacher participation or in which the librarian was the only outreach person.

With regard to school leadership roles in parent participation projects, it seems important to take the parent perspective into account. The difficulty of parent recruitment in urban schools makes that especially necessary. In addition, given the importance of personal relationships, the "more-is-better-bring-the-crowds-in" orientation of the schools seems inappropriate.

In Partnership schools, parents came to the sessions for a variety of reasons - because of the access to books, because they wanted to learn more or "do right" for their child, because their child asked them to come, because of the sociability provided, because of the food or other material incentives, or simply because school was "a warm place" to be compared to unheated apartments. Parent participation programs need to recognize and build on the fact that parents find different things in the program, and that their goals and needs may differ from those of the school.

There was a need in the program to emphasize the obvious, that parents are a resource for family reading and that resources need cultivation. School personnel were brought to recognize the need for energetic and inventive parent recruitment, and to capitalize on instances of what were considered unwelcome parent concerns. For example, in two schools it was reported that Hispanic parents tended to "hang around" the kindergartens; staff considered them "overly possessive" of the children and "suspicious" of the school, parents who "wanted to be sure the kids will be treated right.". Schools were encouraged to act on the opportunity for parent involvement afforded by this situation of parent presence in their school

The Partnership could not have progressed without the growing competence of teachers and the staff development workshops. One concern has been to orient teachers toward a role as parent educators. As has been noted, teachers focus on interaction with the children and benefits to the children from the program. But there are signs of a shift in role definition. Teachers report gratification at seeing the enjoyment parents as well as children find in the program; they are pleased at having helped create a structure that enables such family enjoyment. Teachers also enjoy the direct informal contact with adults; several state that it gives them gratification to have parents ask for book recommendations. As presenters in the parent sessions, teachers are taking on new roles particularly in those schools where the programs involve much social interaction. Teachers have also reported that they are learning more about families from observing the parents and children together.

Summary

This is a critical analysis from the inside of the difficulties and benefits of working across traditional boundaries. Public schools and institutions of teacher education share common purposes but are separated by differing bureaucracies, status, and organizational resources. This description of the contexts for collaboration on a parent participation project reporting the perspectives of parents, teachers, and the college researcher is especially timely in view of the increasing federal, state and local focus on the need for parent involvement, and the concern with intergenerational literacy in urban school districts. The study also has ramifications for parent-teacher relationships, and teachers' assumption of new professional roles.

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Figure 1. Selected Characteristics of Participating Schools

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Ethnicity - %[1]							
Black	.25	.96	.16	.69	.36	.55	.37
Latino	.58	.04	.79	.31	.62	.43	.61
Other	.16	.00	.04	.00	.02	.02	.02
Grade (no.) of participating classes,'88-'89	K (1)	K (2) Gr.1 (1)	Gr.1 (1) Gr. 2 (1) Gr. 3 (1)	K (2) Gr. 1 (4)	K (2) Gr.1 (1)	K (2)	K (2) Gr.1 (6)
&'89-'90	K (1) Gr.1 (3)	K (2) Gr. 1(3) Gr. 3 (3)	Gr.1 (1) Gr.2 (1) Gr.3 (1)	K (2) Gr. 1 (4)	K (2) Gr.1 (2)	K (2)	K (2) Gr. 1 (6)
Library Facilities	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no
Key personnel	teacher(K)	teacher(K) counselor	2 teachers (Gr.1&.2)	teacher(Gr1) librarian	teacher(K) teacher(Gr1 '88-'89 only)	librarian teacher(K '88-'89 only)	teacher(Gr.1)
Administrator support [2] '88-'89	a	a, b	-	b	b	b	b
& '89-'90	a	a,b	-	-	a,b	-	b

1. 1986 School Census. Rounded figures.
2. Administrator support has been categorized as (a) facilitation of the program by such actions as providing resources, ideas and help in planning, adjusting teachers' schedules, and arranging meetings or partiipating in meetings with key teachers, and (b) lending visible presence through participating in the parent sessions on a regular basis..The designations for each school indicate the characteristic type of administrator support given.